



Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

8037th meeting

Wednesday, 30 August 2017, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt)

Members:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
China	Mr. Cheng Lie
Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
France	Mrs. Gueguen
Italy	Mr. Cardi
Japan	Mr. Bessho
Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Senegal	Mr. Seck
Sweden	Mr. Skau
Ukraine	Mr. Ilnytskyi
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ..	Mr. Rycroft
United States of America	Mrs. Haley
Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 4 August 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/680)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 4 August 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/680)

The President (spoke in Arabic): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Israel and Lebanon to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/743, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/680, which contains the text of a letter dated 4 August 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

The President (spoke in Arabic): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2373 (2017).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (spoke in French): We welcome the unanimous renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for another year. As penholder, as it does every year, France assumed its responsibility and tried to keep the unity of the Security Council on renewing UNIFIL's

mandate. It being necessary to preserve its mandate, we all agreed in the Council to maintain the mission's capacity to ensure that it can carry out its tasks as best as possible. I would like to thank all the members of the Council and the parties for their cooperation and constructive attitude during the negotiations, which were difficult.

UNIFIL is a regional public good. It is carrying out its mandate by monitoring the cessation of hostilities along the Blue Line, where the situation remains volatile but overall calm and stable after more than 10 years. That is in and of itself a major accomplishment, specially when we see that elsewhere in the region the security situation has deteriorated. Carrying out its work in a difficult area of operations, UNIFIL plays an indispensable role of being between the two sides even though the forces present have quite superior capacities. As with all operations and arrangements, UNIFIL can of course can do better and can do more. But no one within the Council can imagine for one second that environment without UNIFIL.

We went as far as we could to take into account the concerns of some Member States, even though the preference of almost the entire Council was for a strictly technical renewal. As a troop contributor, we are well aware of the situation in the south of Lebanon and do not want to imperil the delicate balance. However, that in no way excludes the possibility of working in other contexts on the serious concerns expressed by some of our partners.

Given the difficult regional context, UNIFIL has a strategic stabilizing influence that is in the interests of all. In that regard, I would like to commend the troop contributors, especially Italy, which enable UNIFIL to carry out its mandate. It is also essential that the parties respect all of their obligations.

I should like to conclude by commending the Egyptian presidency of the Council for the month of August, which has led our work with efficiency and wisdom. I wish them a happy Eid.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): The United States is very pleased to have supported this renewal of the the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). I want to thank all Security Council members, but especially France for its leadership on this vitally important peacekeeping mission. France, of course, has a historic relationship with Lebanon. It has many troops in UNIFIL, and we appreciate their sacrifices and the

sacrifices made by all troop-contributing countries. We appreciate France's willingness to work with us to make significant improvements in this renewal.

Conditions in south Lebanon are very dangerous today. The clouds of war are gathering. UNIFIL exists to help prevent war from happening again in south Lebanon. It is supposed to do that, in part by helping the Lebanese Government to ensure that there are no weapons outside of State control in UNIFIL's area of operations. We have to be honest: for too long UNIFIL's leadership has failed to make sure that goal is realized. In particular, UNIFIL Force Commander Beary's lack of understanding of the threat Hizbullah poses to the region is baffling.

At the direction of its patron, Iran, the terrorist organization Hizbullah is stockpiling an offensive arsenal in southern Lebanon. It has thousands of missiles and trained fighters, all beyond the control of the Lebanese Government. That is apparent to everyone who cares to see it.

Some have observed that there have been no major hostilities in the area since 2006. They say that is proof that the mission is successful. It is proof of no such thing. Hizbullah is not seeking to prevent war; it is preparing for war. Hizbullah has used the relative quiet since 2006 to rearm itself, in violation of resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004). That is no secret. Hizbullah admits it and brags about it. It parades in front of television cameras. UNIFIL has a difficult mandate and operations in a difficult part of the world. Its troops, including some from members of the Council, have served with dignity and courage. That is why the United States has strongly supported the mission and will continue to do so.

Today's resolution gives UNIFIL robust authority to help Lebanon and keep the south safe. What we sought in the renewal was to make sure that UNIFIL is doing its job to the fullest possible extent, and I am very pleased with what we have accomplished here today. The status quo for UNIFIL was not acceptable, and we did not accept it. The renewal we adopted today does several important things. It expressly highlights the fact that UNIFIL has a mandate to take all the necessary action to prevent its area of operations from being used for hostile activities. It calls on UNIFIL to establish a more visible presence and step up its patrols and inspections so as to disrupt Hizbullah's illicit activities. For the first time since 2006, the resolution emphasizes

that UNIFIL can assist the Lebanese Government in securing its borders in order to stop the flow of illegal weapons into the country. And very critically, it tells UNIFIL to give us clear reports on what it is being prevented from seeing. For too long, when UNIFIL has hit a Hizbullah roadblock, it has turned away. We do not learn what is going on behind those roadblocks. It does not require an active imagination to know that what Hizbullah wants to keep secret is its illegal weapons. UNIFIL must now tell us the details of where, when and why it gets stopped.

Those are all big steps forward. Today's resolution demands that UNIFIL step up its efforts at a moment when Hizbullah is stepping up its own. Hizbullah's past actions tell us what it will do in the future. It has terrorized the people of Lebanon. It has terrorized the people of Syria, standing on the front lines of the Al-Assad regime's criminal activity. It has engaged in terrorist action far beyond the Middle East. Any nation that has experienced the pain of terrorist attacks in its own country should consider the fact that it might be next. The purpose of UNIFIL is not to go to war with Hizbullah. It is to keep its area free of terrorist personnel and weapons, and to report on any denial of its ability to do so. If UNIFIL does that, it will contribute greatly to the area's peace and stability. Our action today will help to ensure that this peacekeeping mission has the power and the will to do its job.

For the United States, this is a time for strength, resolve and accountability at the United Nations. Our actions today go to the heart of our new approach. The United States will not sit by and watch Hizbullah strengthen itself for the next war. We will not be passive as Iran makes a mockery of the Council's work. Today we took a very good step forward. Together, our next job is to make sure that UNIFIL does what we have instructed it to do here today.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes the Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2373 (2017) today. We continue to support a sovereign, stable Lebanon, supported and governed by legitimate State institutions. We recognize the fact that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) makes a significant contribution to Lebanon's stability and security. Without UNIFIL carrying out its vital mission, it would be difficult to argue that Lebanon is more stable or secure, so we are pleased that UNIFIL's mandate has been renewed today.

The United Kingdom continues to be concerned about the violations of resolution 1701 (2006) from both sides of the Blue Line. UNIFIL must be more confident and assertive in enforcing its mandate. Our long-term ambition is to see the Lebanese Armed Forces assert their authority in southern Lebanon and take over responsibilities from UNIFIL. We believe that the resolution we have just adopted provides UNIFIL with the mandate it needs to do the job properly. We now urge the mission and its troop-contributing countries to do everything they can to challenge obstructions to the mission's operation and freedom of movement and to seek to enforce its mandate in full. If those critical requirements are not fulfilled, UNIFIL's forces will struggle and the Lebanese people will be the ones who ultimately pay the price. We therefore repeat our call to all the relevant parties to comply fully with resolution 1701 (2006) and support the critical work that UNIFIL will continue to carry out over the next year.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today the Russian delegation voted in favour of resolution 2373 (2017), which extends the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), because of the important stabilizing role that this peacekeeping mission plays in the region. The positive effect of the work of UNIFIL's peacekeepers is felt not only on the Blue Line between Lebanon and Israel but also within Lebanon and indeed in the Middle East in general. We greatly appreciate the Tripartite Mechanism's efforts to prevent and resolve incidents. The fragile stability of the constructive collaboration that exists among all the Lebanese political forces must be protected. In our view, every issue on the national agenda, including those related to security, should be resolved by legal institutions through a comprehensive intra-Lebanese dialogue and without external interference.

We cherish our bilateral relations with Lebanon and urge everyone to focus on supporting the Lebanese people and the Government. It is also important to help them to implement measures aimed at preserving political and economic stability, in a country that has recently been making forward progress. We should ensure that we maintain a policy of support to Lebanon's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. We hope that the future activities of this important peacekeeping operation will be carried out with full respect for the opinion of the Government of Lebanon.

Mr. Cheng Lie (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the Council's unanimous adoption today of resolution 2373 (2017), which reflects its important support for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). China voted in favour of the resolution, and we would like to thank France for its work as penholder in the discussions and consultations on the draft text. We recognize the mission's effective fulfilment of its mandate, under the leadership of Major General Beary, which has made a valuable contribution to the overall maintenance of calm in the mission's area of operations and to stability in the region. We commend the Lebanese Government's cooperation with UNIFIL and the dedication and sacrifices on the part of all of the mission's peacekeepers and troop-contributing countries.

Challenges still remain for the mission in the form of the continuing crisis in Syria and the serious terrorist situation inside Syria. The Council's extension of UNIFIL's mandate for another 12 months should help to maintain stability in the South of the country, reduce the risk of incidents and escalation and facilitate the further implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). The Security Council and the international community in general should continue to give UNIFIL political support in order to ensure that it has the capacity and resources to fulfil its mandate. We hope that all the relevant parties will work diligently to implement resolution 1701 (2006), exercise restraint, continue to honour the agreement on the cessation of hostilities and work together on further efforts to achieve a permanent ceasefire arrangement. The Council and the international community should continue to provide assistance in that regard.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): Italy voted in favour of resolution 2373 (2017) in order to emphasize its firm and unwavering support for a peacekeeping mission that in our view, in a region plagued by conflicts and division, helps to maintain calm and stability for both Lebanon and Israel to enjoy. Italy is proud to be a member of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), a mission whose excellent performance is due to the quality, dedication and bravery of the personnel provided by 41 troop-contributing countries. We therefore understand fully the security concerns related to the presence of non-authorized weapons in the area of operations and the two other violations of resolution 1701 (2006) by Hizbullah. However, we strongly caution against blurring the line between duties that,

according to resolution 1701 (2006), are entrusted to the Government of Lebanon and those with which the peacekeepers are tasked.

Their responsibilities are very different, and the primary role of the sovereign Government of Lebanon needs to be stressed and respected. Promoting confusion in that regard undermines UNIFIL's operations and strips the Lebanese authorities of their own sovereign prerogatives. Nevertheless, we take note that today the Council has followed its long tradition of unity and consensus on UNIFIL. However, I would like to underline our remaining concerns, with regard to the language of paragraph 15, which we accepted at the very last minute to avoid a division of the Council and to keep its unity, which is paramount for us, and also because we are a responsible component of the peacekeeping mission, being its largest troop-contributing country, together with Indonesia.

In any case, as a troop-contributing country, we reserve the right to assess the measures that the Secretary-General may envisage according to what is requested of him by paragraph 15. Furthermore, it must be stressed that paragraph 15 does not change the existing mandate of UNIFIL.

I would like to conclude with a brief comment on the working methods of the Council. As a member of the Security Council and as UNIFIL's largest troop contributor, with Indonesia, and as a country that has fielded three of the last five Force Commanders of UNIFIL, we would have hoped for more inclusive negotiations. Receiving information from, or being updated by, the penholder, which we thank, in any case, or by the members involved in the negotiations, is not the same as allowing all 15 members of the Council to

have a real positive impact on the same negotiations. The Security Council should always remember to give due consideration to the views of the troop-contributing countries, whose men and women risk their lives on the ground. That applies not only to UNIFIL but to the work we do every day.

As an elected member of the Council, Italy attaches great importance to those principles. I would like to commend Ambassador Bessho on the work done in relation to the working methods, but we think that more should be done to promote working methods that can better serve our common purpose.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation voted in favour of resolution 2373 (2017), which we just adopted. As a troop-contributing country to peacekeeping operations, Uruguay has always endeavoured to ensure that missions are able to discharge their mandates, achieve their objectives and carry out the duties entrusted to them.

In our view, resolution 2373 (2017) further strengthens the role of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) by restoring its level of influence and boosting its capacity for action in the field. UNIFIL has enormous responsibilities in an extremely sensitive area, with a highly complex political landscape. Consequently, UNIFIL must maintain an active and visible presence in its area of operations so that it can remain vigilant and ensure that it carries out its mission.

We fully agree with the remarks made by the Ambassador of Italy on his views of the Security Council's working methods.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.